

THE SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT AND COLOR

By
Manly P. Hall



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THE SYMBOLISM OF LIGHT AND COLOR

This is not intended as a formal treatise on the properties of light and color, as these are explained in scientific textbooks. What we are searching for is deeper understanding rather than greater knowledge. In ancient times light was worshiped as the visible manifestation of a Divine Power. The Pharaoh Akhnaton, described in the old records as “the great of visions,” was probably the first to create a philosophy based upon the mystery of light. He chose the radiant globe of the sun to represent the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent principle of universal life. The sun was also the foundation of Akhnaton’s ethical and moral codes. By extending his basic concept he applied it to every department of human society; most of all it bore witness to the unity of life. From its own unity, light supported an infinite diversity—thus it became the parent and the countless forms that it generated were the progeny of one Father. This seemed to imply a universal equality and an infinite compassion. Akhnaton became certain in himself that light gave itself equally to the rich and the poor, to the friend and the foe. It shone from the brilliant plumage of birds and the faces of newborn babes. One of his most important edicts derived from such meditations was his declaration of universal suffrage. On the philosophical level it led him to become the first monotheist recorded in history. These abstractions brought him into conflict with the priests of the state religion. He no longer accepted the gods of Egypt as supreme, for above and beyond all was the One God of eternal life.

The source of light was invisible; the cause of light was unknowable, but the manifestations of light bore witness to an unfolding purpose ensouling creation. The true religion was distributed throughout nature as part of light itself. Wherever even the tiniest ray struck, living souls came forth and even the grains of sand were quickened. When the seed received the light it was also given the laws of its kind so that it could grow and bear witness to the unfoldment of the infinite potential within

itself. Sun worship was widely diffused among ancient peoples and they were wiser than they knew. The light in themselves enabled them to experience something of the mysteries of light and color. This point is clearly expressed in the great cabalistic text, *The Sefer Ha-Zohar* (The Book of the Infinite Splendours). From light came forth the generations, each in turn receiving as its rightful heritage its proper share of immortal radiance. Such beliefs are not actually in variance with materialistic science. They bear witness to mankind's unending search for meaning which would strengthen the long pilgrimage which could only end in union with the source of eternal life.

The Greeks realized that visible light was a revelation of its own invisible source. The Sun God, Helios, carried on his arm a shield which reflected upon its burnished surface the invisible light of heaven. This point is also subtly intimated in the opening Chapter of the Book of Genesis. In Verse Three it is written: "And God said, Let there be light: And there was light." This took place on the first day of creation. In Verse Sixteen we are told: "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also." The creation of the sun and moon occurred on the fourth day. The term *life* has been used in many systems of mystical philosophy to define *light in abscondita*, or not yet revealed, or distinguished from its own source. The Chaldean Oracles of the Zoroasters refer to the principle of principles, abiding forever in the space dimension of existence, as the "Father Fountain." From this flow the streams of life that divide and divide again, making fruitful the creation.

Light is experienced physically through the faculty of sight. We think of sight as vision, but this is only one of its several meanings. Vision can imply an insight by which the mind gains increasing realization of the substance behind the shadow of superficial appearances. It is the natural ministry of the eyes to provide material for contemplation and reflection. Obviously sight is limited to such objects as lie within the range of visibility. The

undisciplined thinker accepts what he sees without further mentation. As a result he is concerned principally with visible forms as substantial and factual. Because of this visual limitation he locks himself in the sphere of effects, ignoring the unseen causes which might help him to orient himself in his larger environment. This is why the study of symbols should be included in formal education. In esoteric philosophy symbolism has been used as the most available means of strengthening the contemplative faculties.

Sacred books include countless allegories, rich with symbolic meaning. Great works of art, especially those dealing with religious subjects, are largely symbolical. There is scarcely any creative work of mankind that is not inspired by some degree of mystical insight. The mandalas of Buddhism, the intricate diagrams of the cabalists, and the geometrical figures of Euclid can be traced to the secret sciences of the ancient mysteries. Enigmas challenge the mind to search for hidden truth, and their solutions depend largely upon the intuitive powers of those who view them. The living symbols of the natural world are available to all, but we seldom pause in our hasty journey through this mortal sphere to contemplate abstractions. Because of this failure we neglect to discipline our faculties.

Lao-tse, the Chinese sage, never went to school. Yet, by communion with mountains, forests, and oceans he became one of the wisest men who ever lived. His reputation for learning reached the Imperial ear, and he was appointed librarian of the Library of the Chou. The man who read few, if any, books was made custodian of the wisdom of China.

Another important concept which has descended to us from the past is the belief that the universe is a living Being. Creation is a manifestation of that Being which ensouls all of the forms which emerge from it and bear witness to its inexhaustible resources. It is generally admitted scientifically that the essential nature of light is unknown, and it can only be defined in terms of its revealed attributes. Some have suggested that light is a

rate of vibration. It is also conceivable that the principle of light is a vast entity, permeating time and space, and co-eternal with them. Eastern philosophers like to think that what we call light is the radiant vestment of a conscious power, and even its tiniest ray bears within it what Boehme, the German mystic, refers to as "The Signatura Rerum," or the seal of the Divine Purpose. There is an invisible light which nourishes the spirits of living things, an intellectual light which sustains mental activity, an emotional light which makes the soul fruitful of good, and a physical light which illumines the material world.

In common usage we recognize many attributes of light but there is an inclination to assume that they are figures of speech to be taken symbolically rather than literally. There is the light of comprehension that comes to the face of a small child when it first understands the multiplication table. There is a dawning in the mind of the scholar when he discovers the solution to some difficult problem. There is a radiance which seems to enfold the mystic in moments of rapture, and there is a light of love which makes perfect the wide range of human affection. We refer to the light of truth, that tremendous power which dispels the darkness of ignorance, and the light of aspiration which guides us toward the fulfillment of our hopes.

In old paintings of the saints, light is often included as a symbol of the intuitive faculties within man himself. In a famous picture of St. Jerome, Albrecht Durer depicts St. Jerome seated at a table contemplating the mysteries of the Holy Bible. He is reading by the light of a single candle which represents the light of grace in his own soul. If light is not present within us the mysteries of the spiritual universe and the essential secrets of the material world must remain unsolved. We grow by the light of wisdom and the light of faith, and in due time we are led toward understanding. The powers hidden within light give us ultimate victory over the unknown. Soul light vanquishes ignorance, superstition, and fear. As a person becomes 'enlightened,' he becomes increasingly aware of the Eternal Good. He realizes the importance of rectify-

ing his own conduct by the two great lights of ethics and morality. He begins to realize that all the delinquencies of society and the shortcomings of his own nature result from failure to guard the flame flickering on the altar of his own soul. This is the everburning lamp of the Rosicrucian mystics which must never be left untended, and replenishes itself forever from within itself.

The alchemists were called "philosophers by fire." Each had his laboratory, and here stood the furnace upon which all his experiments depended. If the fire was too hot, the materials in his vessels and retorts were destroyed. If the fire was not warm enough, the elements with which he worked could not pass through their numerous transformations. The more mystical of these chemists realized that the warmth which caused the metals to germinate within their wombs of glass came from within himself. If he read his old texts correctly he learned the inner meaning of dedication. By love for God and his fellow men the even temperature was maintained and the universal medicine which was for the healing of the nation was perfected in due time. It was these hermetic philosophers, also, who believed that the great pyramid of Gizeh, that strange monument set up in Egypt, was the symbol of the Great Work, the regeneration of humanity. (The word *pyramid* is derived from the root *pyr*, meaning fire or light.) Ancient writers tell us that when all of the casing stones of the pyramid were in place and reflected the rays of the sun, the structure was visible at great distance as a triangle of light pointing upward toward its own source.

The mystery of resurrection was first recognized by those agrarian cults to whom the quickening of seeds in the earth was *prima facie* evidence of the Divine Presence. Light became the immediate carrier of life itself and the promise of the resurrection of the dead. Wherever light existed there could be no death, and because light was everywhere immortality was inevitable. In human experience there are quickenings of insight and understanding. The mind gives birth to ideas and the heart to ideals. Paracelsus believed that there is a light

that shines particularly in the realm of thought making mental labors fruitful. He was convinced that there were three suns in our solar system, although only one is visible. The other two were within it as the higher parts of its triune constitution. Every ray of the sun contains within it the powers of this holy trinity. Again the law of analogy made a contribution. The holy trinity abiding in man manifested as spirit, soul, and body—or as the Chinese philosophers put it—heaven, earth, and man. In this trichotomy heaven symbolized the total person, the source of his being. Earth was his physical body, and by extension his material environment. Man, standing between heaven and earth, was the soul, the seat of individuality which was placed in a middle distance between the above and the below to become the reconciler of all opposites. (In alchemy, sulphur equates with heaven, salt with earth, and mercury with man.) All the propensities available to the individual were represented in Pythagorean philosophy by the octahedron, an eight-faced symmetrical solid, which according to Plato signified the soul.

The most interesting references to light in the New Testament are found in the first chapter of the Gospel According to St. John. This opens with the words: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Verses 4 and 5 read: "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." It seems reasonable to infer that light bears witness to the one life diffused throughout existence. Those who become aware of light are forever in the presence of God, for this is "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Those who experience the mystery of this light within themselves are properly called the *enlightened ones*.

In addition to his corporeal constitution, every human being is surrounded by a radiation which is usually referred to as the *aura*. There has been some research substantiating the early belief in these auric radiations. Dr. Walter J. Kilner who labored in a hospital in London,

wrote a book called *The Human Atmosphere: The Aura*. With the aid of chemical screens Dr. Kilner studied the interior organization of the aura, emphasizing its value as a means of diagnosing certain diseases. Unfortunately research in this area is extremely limited, depending largely upon the reports of clairvoyants. In many Eastern systems, the subject is treated in greater detail. The aura has two poles—a positive and a negative. Through the positive pole solar nutrition is continually entering and this, circulating through the auric field, nourishes the vital organs and sensory functions of the human body. Through the negative pole, waste materials are eliminated to be recycled and purified by the solar energy. This invisible circulatory system can be symbolized by the human heart with its arterial and venous circulation. The aura itself is a miniature solar system united with the planetary and zodiacal forces through bonds of sympathetic similarity. The human aura is stratified for it contains the auras of the separate organs together with the vital, emotional, and mental vehicles and their attributes. The solar energy operates in three ways: light comes directly from the sun, or it may be reflected from the surfaces of the planetary bodies, or from the moon which is a luminary circling about the earth's magnetic core. The direct ray of the sun sustains the spiritual center in man. The rays reflected from the planets sustain the soul, and the moon governs the reproductive powers which are referred to as the eighth power of the soul. As most physical ailments arise from depletion of the psychic or soul field, we must search there for the invisible causes of visible illness.

Every structure in nature has a number, a color, a sound, and a form, and all bear witness to a universal archetype—one pattern or design unfolding on the various planes of existence. These together form Homer's Golden Chain which links the earth with the pinnacle of Olympus. In the old systems the mental energies of life are parts of the soul syndrome. By this concept spiritual light is universality, soul light is individuality, and bodily

light is personality, or the light of nature. Light does not move in a qualitative vacuum. What we call the intervals between bodies in space are like tissues containing an infinite number of nerves, arteries, veins and capillaries. Light moves through these channels. This idea has gained considerable strength when radio and television were invented. We know that the pictures and sounds are transmitted as conditions of energy. Each broadcasting station has its own frequency or channel. Otherwise the various rates would mingle in hopeless confusion.

The association of light with the faculty of sight also invites consideration. The person born blind cannot experience the wonder of the solar radiance. Helen Keller wrote beautiful descriptions of landscapes, trees, and flowers, but only knew them through her teachers. Miss Keller told me that she had never had any type of metaphysical experience. Her grasp of the inter-relationships of living things was derived in part from the Holy Scriptures. She read the Bible in braille, and was a devout Swedenborgian. Miss Keller, who could study the forms of things by holding objects in her hands or touching their surfaces and by combining two or more testimonies, was able to define or describe shapes, sizes, weights, and textures. Even those with ordinary vision follow much the same procedure. There is a kind of darkness which conceals the forms of things and another kind which conceals their meanings. It has been said that there are none so blind as those who will not see. Unless an inner light comes to the aid of natural light, we wander in a darkness which we now call light. When Odin, the Nordic father god, sought to understand the mystery of his own destiny, he was told to pluck out one of his own eyes and cast it into the pool at the root of the tree of life. The Bible reminds us: "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." This is the meaning of the radiant jewel placed on the forehead of images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. What we call differences of opinion are really evidences of levels of insight. We must outgrow the concept of basic conflicts in the workings of divine and natural laws. The reconciliation of all

opposites through understanding enables us to examine the phenomena of existence with a single eye.

Buddhism has taught this truth by pointing out that all conditions are relative, and only the unconditioned is real. Essential learning resolves differences and overcomes forever the competition of opinion which, as Heraclitus pointed out, is a falling sickness of the reason. The external universe is an everchanging pageantry of processes which are means to an end, but are never the end in themselves. Lights and shadows of thinking are found on nearly all levels of mentation. Light supports optimism and shadows support pessimism. Shadows are doubts, uncertainties, and the vast field of speculation is the shadowland. The three deities especially venerated in East Indian theology are Brahma, the rising sun; Vishnu, the sun at midday; and Shiva, the sun at nightfall. Theoretically, at least, Vishnu is the savior of all that lives because at noon the sun casts no shadow.

Colors have played an important part in the religious symbolism of mankind for thousands of years. They were associated with the various deities and the prevailing arrangement has descended to us through astrology. The ziggurats, or astronomical towers of Babylonia and Chaldea, were usually constructed with seven platforms or levels, each of which was painted a different color. Most of the early colorations have faded away, but have been noted by early historians. The priests serving the altars of the various divinities wore vestments of appropriate hues, and this practice with certain modifications was perpetuated in the early Christian Church. It was inevitable that the brilliant pigmentations of flora and fauna should have intrigued those of thoughtful minds, and gradually a language of color came to be universally accepted. A good example is associated with the practice of medicine. Flowers, shrubs, and even minerals were believed to possess therapeutic virtues according to their colors and these were duly classified. Dyes of early artisans extended the symbolism into the fields of clothing and adornment. In due time colors came

to be insignias of rank, and more recently they have become part of the science of heraldry.

Until the fourth century A.D., the only liturgical color recognized by the early Christian Church was white. About the thirteenth century the use of red, green, violet, and black was duly prescribed for certain rites and ceremonies, and influenced the vestments worn by the several grades of the clergy. White, as the most appropriate symbol of light, took precedence over all the other colors in spiritual significance. Blue and violet were used occasionally, but deep purple was not favored, possibly due to its association with secular rulership. Purple was the imperial color of Rome, and when a Caesar participated in religious ceremonials he wore a purple robe and red shoes. There has been considerable controversy over the shoes, and the opinion is that it originated with the blood of sacrificed animals. Liturgical colors are strongly associated with Christian mysticism, and the meanings ascribed to them were largely theological. There is a possibility, however, that the interpretations originated in the metaphysical speculations of Egyptian and Greek initiate priests. This is certainly true in the case of the Greek Orthodox Church, but interest in this phase of the subject has subsided in recent times. According to a high prelate of the Eastern Church, for example, the robes worn in the College of Cardinals are traceable to the Scarlet Council of the Pharaoh of Egypt.

In Christian religious art, white was the purest of all colors and was worn by those completely dedicated to the service of God. It stood for humility, integrity, and detachment from all worldliness. Purity was a natural virtue for all men. Humility was appropriate to persons in authority, and integrity was required of those sitting in judgment upon their fellow men. There has been no complete agreement in the religious use of colors in recent times, but in early art Christ was usually robed in white. It was proper to depict the Virgin Mary in white also, especially after the Assumption. White is worn by the Pope as Pontifex Maximus and Vicar of Deity. Worn by

nuns, it indicated their marriage to Christ because they had become "brides of the Lamb."

In the early days of Christian symbolism, red symbolized loyalty, divine love, the creative power of God, and martyrdom. After the crucifixion Christ is sometimes represented wearing a red cloak over his seamless white robe. Red, as a symbol of the cleansing blood, is therefore an appropriate symbol of the Passion of Christ. It further suggests the ardent desire of the believer for personal identification with God. Among the troubadours and other Christian mystics, the red rose stood for divine love and the white rose for inspired wisdom. The combination of dark red and black was assigned to Satan.

Blue, because it was the color of the sky, signified heaven; also truth and fidelity. Christ is sometimes shown wearing a blue cloak or mantle, and the Virgin Mary is pictured with a gown or veil of azure color. In some systems blue is associated with meditation and the purification of the mind leading to the experience of true wisdom. It is also considered a peaceful color suggesting the mystical experience.

For some reason green was not especially favored in old Christian art, and its meaning originated in the contemplation of nature and the annual resurrection of living things. Each year at the vernal equinox, the earth put on its adornments of foliage. In a mystic sense therefore, green was a fertility symbol bearing witness of the benevolent powers bringing all things to fruition. It further implies spiritual integrity and victory over the vicissitudes of life.

Yellow or gold is associated with marriage, and in higher mysticism with the marriage of the Church to Christ. It was also a color of fruitfulness. It may have been inspired by the ripening of grain or that aspect of light which made possible an abundant harvest. A dingy, or brownish yellow, considered an unpleasant hue, was assigned to Judas who betrayed his Lord. The golden ornaments on the altar and the golden threads in the vestments of officiating priests were believed to reflect the light of the spiritual sun.

Violet was the color of the suffering and passion of Christ, of repentance, love of truth, and purification from mortal sin. Mary Magdalene as a penitent wears a violet robe. The Mother of Christ, after the crucifixion, was gowned in violet because she shared spiritually the suffering of her Son. Christ, after the resurrection was sometimes depicted with a violet robe over a white undergarment. Violet, according to the Church Fathers, signified sickness and sadness. It was a gentle reminder that all mortal things will fade away. Institutions created by mortals in this mundane sphere are few of days. They come forth and are cut down, for all is vanity except dedication to truth. It is interesting that the purple color range is also fugitive.

Black was the color of mortality, mourning, and humility. In some old paintings Christ is shown robed in black during the temptation in the wilderness. This somber color is a reminder of original sin and is worn by penitent orders as a confession of the need for repentance. It was always associated with death and the darkness of the tomb, but there is also the implication that unless the seed dies, it cannot be born again. The soul confesses its shortcomings by raiments of mourning. These are the widow's weeds worn by those who are separated from their Lord. The black garments of the clergy imply the hope of inner spiritual resurrection through service to God.

The polarities of white and black have been carried forward from primitive beliefs that light was a universal benefactor and darkness an appropriate symbol of aloneness and the fears which arise in those who have no consolation in God. In old folklore evil forces had their greatest power in those hours between sunset and dawn, and hope returned when the new day was heralded by the crowing of the cock. This resulted in a special sacred significance being given to the bird of dawn. In Oriental astronomy the sun was represented by a rooster in the center of a red disk, and the moon by a rabbit against a white circular background. In iconography gold could be substituted for any of the colors and this practice is also

found in the imagery of Oriental nations. This simply means that light itself contains all colors and can be substituted for them.

In esoteric Tibetan Buddhism five colors are also recognized. It is reserved for the Dhyani Buddha, Mahavairocana, the primordial power residing forever in its own nature. Vairocana stands for space, the all-containing light within which differentiations take place. Here, an analogy with certain tenets of Greek mysticism may prove useful. Conditions of existence were defined as (1) the unmoved mover of all things, (2) the self-moving, and (3) the moved. Spirit was the unmoved mover; soul, the self-moving, and the body, the moved. By this classification the Dhyani Buddhas are the unmoved; the Dhyani Bodhisattvas, the self-moving; and the historical Buddhas, the moved. In this system the five colors are white, blue, yellow, red, and green. In the great pagoda at Mt. Koya, Vairocana is placed in the center and from him emanate four other figures. The one seated in the East is blue; in the South, yellow; in the West, red; and in the North, green. In the mandalas these colors are clearly indicated. The present world order is the fourth in the great cycle, and the color red is assigned to it. The Dhyani Buddha of the present age is Amitabha, the Dhyani Bodhisattva is Avalokitesvara (Kannon), and the human Buddha is Gautama. Amitabha should properly be represented as of red color and his emanations follow in the line of red. The entire sequence is related to the concept of compassion, by which is implied the renunciation of self for the salvation of all that lives. It has been said in mystical Buddhism that Gautama, the historical Buddha, shed his own blood in all the realms of existence, that living things might attain enlightenment.

The fifth Dhyani Buddha Amoghasiddhi will move into manifestation on the green ray. His Dhyani Bodhisattva is Visvapani, and the physical teacher will be Maitreya. Thus the green emanation is keyed to the Doctrine of Kindness. The implication is the establishment of a world order dedicated to amity and the uniting of all peoples in honorable relationships. While most of

the schools of Northern Buddhism follow this color formula, there are some variations influenced by local conditions and older religious teachings. Throughout the Trans-Himalayan area, and extending through China, Japan, and Korea, the advent of the Maitreya Buddha is ardently desired, and representations of him are frequently met with in old temples or their gardens. He is usually shown with a stupa or reliquary tower on his forehead, or held in his hands.

The color symbolism is often mingled in radiating bands resembling a rainbow. The nimbus of Vairocana frequently shows this rainbow-like appearance. In *World Healers*, Lady E. A. Gordon writes: "At Venice, Christ enthroned on a rainbow is supported by four flying angels." In both Eastern and Western mysticism the rainbow is a symbol of reconciliation between God and man. It unites heaven and earth by a bridge of light as described in the Nordic theology. The spectrum as we know it today sustains the old symbolism that salvation is diffused throughout existence through channels of color. Reconciliation in this usage has the same meaning as redemption and light becomes the bond and the promise that in the fullness of time creation itself will become one again with the ineffable power which brought it forth.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was the greatest scientist of his time and continues to receive the admiration of the learned. It is interesting to remember that Newton was deeply religious and gave considerable time to the study of Rosicrucian lore and alchemy. One of his greatest discoveries was that when a narrow beam of sunlight was decomposed by passing through a prism, the range of colors locked within sunlight was released, producing a spectrum. Further research proved that the colors of the spectrum could not be broken down, but retained their identities when passed through other prisms. While Newton's experiments had been experienced intuitively long before his day, he provided the irrefutable evidence that light contained within itself qualities and characteristics that found specialized expressions in every department of nature. Universal laws manifesting

through light sustain the harmony of the world. Each of the colors or combinations of them filled a precise purpose. One step further enabled the religionists to perceive in the spectrum a complete moral order and the god who dwelt above the firmament was seen to be present in every sunbeam. The countless forms, unfolding through the natural world, were fed according to their needs.

To the materialist light is only a form of energy, but the more thoughtfully we contemplate its mysteries, the more certain we become that it is an eternal testimony to a master plan hidden in the depths of space. Western religions have been content to accept and use color symbolism, but they have never explored systematically its deeper meaning. Eastern doctrines are basically idealistic, and in their sacred writings Orientals have always assumed that we inhabit a living universe. Total existence is not an *entirety*, but an *entity*, and every atom is ensouled by an archetypal purpose. What better means could be found to justify the reality of things unseen than light when it is broken into a spectrum. Such thinking inclines us to the contemplation of cosmic biology and physiology. This is largely the Buddhist position.

As light sustains all the generative processes of nature it must be considered androgynous. This concept is sustained by the mudra, or hand posture, of Mahavairocana in the Diamond Mandara of esoteric Buddhism. The cosmic space deity is depicted as personifying the union of the polar opposites of nature in perfect equilibrium. If the energy sustaining existence is male-female, it becomes obvious that all forms of life share equally in its vital resources. Equality underlies all the apparent inequalities which the human mind had arbitrarily accepted. Life is one and all the expressions of it participate in its benevolent processes.

Dr. Edwin D. Babbitt in his classic volume, *The Principles of Light and Color*, writes: "*All Beauty and all Natural Growth exemplify Moral and Spiritual Perfection. All objects which do not do so are deformed.*" The person who takes cognizance of suns, stars, leaves, flowers, trees, landscapes and sounds as merely an assemblage of forms, colors, and

tones devoid of this diviner expression, is blind and deaf to the principal meaning of the universe, and can never attain to the conception of High Art: *Let those who decry real Beauty then remember that they are condemning the expression of the Infinite Goodness.*"

In 1887, Dr. Babbitt published a rare and curious work entitled *Human Culture and Cure*. This was issued in six parts of which the first set forth at considerable length his concept of color therapy. Described and pictured are a number of instruments which Babbitt had invented during his practice of color therapy. Probably the most interesting is what has come to be known as "Babbitt's bottle." This is described as a double, convex, hollow lens which, when filled with water, concentrates light by refraction. These lenses were colored with transparent dyes. The colorations used were yellow-orange, red, blue, and purple. The lenses were 7" or more in diameter and held one to two quarts of water. Each was provided with a hollow handle and a stopper. When filled with pure water and exposed to the direct light of the sun for various lengths of time they were charged with the therapeutic colors mentioned above. These lenses were used in two ways. After the water was charged it could be poured out of the lens and taken internally, thus introducing the color to the complete body like any other medicinal substance. Because of its lens-like shape, it could also be used to focus its coloration on small areas in the treatment of localized ailments. Babbitt admitted that artificial light could also be used to charge these lenses, but obviously, he considered the direct light of the sun as the most efficacious.

Babbitt also devised a funnel with some of the properties of a reflecting telescope. This he called "the chromodisk." It was made of copper, nickel-plated inside. The large end was held directly opposite the sun, the power of which was intensified by the nickel-plated inner surface. The small end was then placed near or against the part of the body to receive treatment. At first, colored glass circles were placed at the near end, but these were so frequently broken by heat that they were finally

inserted about midway between the two ends of the funnel. The length of the treatments differed according to the needs of the patient, as determined by a proper medical examination. He also adapted what we now call "the cabinet bath" by making the walls of sheets of colored glass. This treatment brought the remedial agencies to the entire body simultaneously. Dr. Babbitt was very ingenious, and produced equipment to meet all needs, and for some years these could be ordered through a distribution center which he established in New York. Unfortunately, this is no longer in existence.

Of all civilized peoples, the Japanese have the keenest appreciation of their natural environment. From time immemorial they have been nature lovers and this has influenced every phase of their culture. With them, appreciation has been raised to the dignity of veneration, and this is especially noticeable in their gardens. They have never considered it appropriate to enter into competition with nature or to improve upon the patterns which it has established. When the individual attempts to dominate the beauties of the world around him by imposing his own imperfect attitudes on matters beyond his comprehension, the result is displeasing to the soul, which intuitively recognizes propriety.

The expert Japanese gardener makes every possible effort to conceal his own ingenuity. He wishes to leave the impression that he is a servant rather than a master of the materials which he uses. As a painter is selective in the choice of subject matter, the Oriental gardener places every plant and shrub where its particular or unique qualities are given the fullest expression. As a wise parent guides the character of a child but does not interfere with its individuality, so the horticulturist helps each plant to be completely itself. The Japanese garden is created to express symbolically a philosophy of life. The labor is dedicated to the greater glory of beauty as a revelation of truth. The palace gardens of Europe are more formal and stand for a complete victory of personal preference. Such regimentations are not pleasing to Eastern sensibilities. The flowers and plants are drawn up in rows like soldiers,

and the larger beds suggest pinwheels of color. The human factor is everywhere and nature must withdraw to some distant hillside if its own ways are to survive.

In nature there are few chromatic discords and each region of the earth has its appropriate colorations. The arctic and antarctic zones are largely achromatic, being gradations between black and white. In the temperate zones there is variety with restraint and seasonal changes which contribute to the natural beauty. In the torrid zones coloration is extremely florid, and contrasting colors are skillfully combined. Peoples living in these zones and supported by the light energy in their environment are inwardly influenced and outwardly affected by the various color harmonies. Temperate zones have produced the most advanced cultures because they are spared from those extremes which disturb the mature concerns of living.

Architecture, both ancient and modern, involves chromatic factors. Japanese buildings are never required to dominate their natural settings. They should blend with the background and be as inconspicuous as possible. Natural, unpainted wood is preferred and as this ages it gains dignity and that respect which is conferred upon the aged. When repairs are necessary, these are also inconspicuous and every suggestion of newness is avoided. Great shrines and temples sometimes seem to violate this canon, but in a short time the colors mellow until, like autumn leaves, they fit appropriately into the landscape. Western architecture is not always so fortunate. Modern buildings are monuments to their architect, symbols of business enterprises, or revelations of the opulence of their owners. Huge black structures appear especially depressing, and it is hoped that this fad will pass as human taste matures.

While most working people must spend a considerable part of their lives in the steel and concrete jungle, the use of light and color in private homes requires immediate consideration. As light is associated with life there should be adequate windows, and wherever possible, walls and ceilings should convey the impression of airiness. Floor

covering is entitled to a thoughtful selection of materials. The floor of a house, like the surface of the earth, should suggest space or an indoor garden. Again, light and gentle colors should predominate. The American home at the present time has a tendency to be in trouble with its furnishings. Most of the avant-garde paintings, prints, and sculptures violate the laws of harmony. While some of these productions are conversation pieces, it should be remembered that both mind and body are influenced by discords taken in through the eyes. It is easier to maintain family peace if simple rules of good taste are followed. Works of art should be selected because they help to maintain harmonious living, and not because they are in vogue at the moment. The science of color is well advanced in many lines of business that deal with home furnishings, and those who do not understand color harmonies and contrasts may do well to seek assistance.

In the last fifty years there have been many changes in the fabric industry. Today, the looms of Asia, Europe, and America are producing magnificent examples of the weavers' and dyers' skills. Coloration is also a factor in the appearance of each individual, and there should be harmonious relations between wearers and their garments. Poor taste in clothing has considerable effect upon the environment, and the lowering of the standards of personal propriety in connection with fabrics is another point to be emphasized which seems to have been generally disregarded. Light flowing into the body must pass through synthetic fabrics and dyes which can act as filters. The colors in fabrics have their own vibratory radiations which may affect the skin, causing allergic reactions.

The achromatic range from white to black through grey results in a gradation which invites consideration. The Japanese *sumi-e* painters are masters of the technique of such gradations. They are able to achieve extraordinary effects which carry the impression of several different colors. *Sumi-e* art has been favored by the Zen sect which emphasizes simplicity and severity. It has further been noted that when any other color is mixed

with black it is deepened or darkened—often unpleasantly. Persons with neurotic tendencies should avoid black and murky colors which are depressive and debilitating. Dark hues absorb color and heat whereas white reflects light and, therefore, is more pleasant to wear on warm summer days. Wool is a poor carrier of light and it also blocks the energy rays flowing from the human body. Cotton is the most appropriate for general wear as it permits a free circulation of light rays. Silk is a more protective fabric, but in the last analysis, protection is limitation so far as light is concerned.

Sight is the faculty which most directly receives light into the psychic field of consciousness. The earliest forms of chromatic therapy were created around the idea of healing by causing the patient to gaze upon different colored substances. Later, through artificial means, rooms were lighted with different hues and the patient was seated therein for a regulated length of time—sometimes several hours. Color screens have been used to focus various shades of light on different parts of the human body. Red was recommended to stimulate the circulation of the blood, yellow for nervous exhaustion, and blue stimulated mental images and pacified worriers. Relaxation of the nervous system was improved by violet, and physical fatigue and tension responded to green. Experiments with plants and animals seemed to support this general point of view. One of the principal difficulties of the moment involves the creation of filters in which the pure colors are not contaminated by the mixture of other shadows. Blue, for example, as found in light bulbs nearly always contains some red, and green has been conditioned by the addition of minute amounts of yellow or blue. It may be that such compounds are also useful, but they are difficult to classify.

The Chinese involved color in their theory of government. Documents, especially the appointments of officials, were prepared on long rolls of brocaded silk. Each roll consisted of a panel of red, blue, black, white, and yellow to represent the five provinces of China. The Chinese also recognized five planets (not including the

sun or moon). Each of the provinces was under the guardianship of one of these planets, and the imperial robes always united the colors of the provinces. The classes of mandarins were distinguished by accessories of various colors, and both the dragon and the phoenix were appropriately multicolored. This brings into focus the astro-theological attributions of colors to the planets, and in some cases to the constellations. Stained glass windows in churches were to permit the sun's rays to pass through representations of sanctified beings or symbols associated with the Christian faith. The colors were carefully selected by artisans versed in the chromatic concepts of their times, and it must be acknowledged that the luminous windows contributed to the mood of the devout worshiper. He accepted into himself a benediction of light which served as a protection against the contaminating influences of the outside world.

Among the peoples of antiquity astrology provided a convenient means for classifying many forms of knowledge. The philosophical schools preferred to consider all branches of learning as interrelated and interdependent. Every architect made use of astrological principles when designing sanctuaries for the deities, palaces for rulers, and tombs for the illustrious dead. Pythagoras demonstrated on several occasions the importance of music, and in the course of time his system was also included in textbooks on astrology. Physicians depended heavily upon plants, minerals, and metals in the compounding of remedies for human ailments, and the laws of nations were patterned after the harmony of the celestial spheres. There have been a number of different classifications of zodiacal influences on the various structures and organs of the human body and the physiological processes associated with them. In each case the color factor was carefully noted and influenced the selection of medicinal materials, and much of this lore is still traceable in the modern pharmacopoeia. In the following listings, color is first mentioned because of the magical elements involved in primitive therapy. Talismans often included the color symbols of deities and extended into

the plant and mineral kingdoms. Protective signets were carved into the surfaces of precious stones selected according to their zodiacal allotments. Paracelsus, often referred to as the father of pharmacology, never hesitated to attract sidereal rays in dew gathered on plates of glass which he believed to be impregnated with the color vibrations of the different combinations of planets. Chromatic therapy is reviving many of the old beliefs and justifying the researches of earlier physicians.

The relationships between the zodiacal colors and the physiological processes of the human body are usually given as follows:

Aries: Brilliant red. The distribution of mental and physical energies and the brain control of body functions.

Taurus: Orange red. Recuperative vitality which protects health in periods of stress.

Gemini: Orange. The element of air in the body. Oxygenation. The interplay of the sensory powers and the electric nerve fluid.

Cancer: Yellow-orange. Nutrition and the alchemical transformation in the digestion of food. Peristaltic action and the perpetuation of cell formation.

Leo: Yellow. The stimulation of the vital field of the heart. The quickening of the embryo and the distribution of energy through the blood.

Virgo: Yellow-green. The absorption of nutrition. The assimilation of food. Body chemistry in general, and elimination.

Libra: Green. Processes involving distillation, sublimation, glandular secretion, and the fluids of the body. Kidney functions.

Scorpio: Bluish green. Procreation, pigmentation and body coloration in general.

Sagittarius: Blue. The motor nerve action. The development of the sensory faculties and both quantitative and qualitative motion.

Capricorn: Violet blue. Nucleolation, induration, crystallization, the conserving of natural resources, and the aging process.

Aquarius: Violet (and the indigo range). The defense

mechanisms which protect the body from toxins and the inroads of infections. There is emphasis upon the lungs and the nervous system.

Pisces: Red-violet. Lymphatic system. Perspiration, the action of the lachrymal glands, liver function, and circulation to the extremities.

Many of the wisest physicians of both Eastern and Western nations have believed that sickness begins with the obstruction of natural processes. This is first evidenced by a debility or impairment of the free circulation and interaction of energies which maintain health. Food, for example, must contain most of the nutritional elements which provide energy to the body. If, for any reason, essential elements are lacking, the system gradually becomes incapable of accepting certain nutritive material. Magnetic fields in the different structures of the organs and tissues are like small constellations. They draw energy from the food through the law of sympathy. Nutrition would fail if the sources outside of the body did not have magnetic polarities within the body. Color is a distributor of nutrition and can stimulate the internal resources in their labor of breaking down obstructions. The principal field upon which energies must labor is the abdominal cavity, for it is obstructions here that most directly disturb the alchemical miracle of assimilation. As one doctor put it, "Most persons die first in the digestive system." In addition to the zodiacal correspondences each of the planets had its part to play in preserving health. Following the formula mentioned earlier, the planets were directly associated with the psychic life of man and the reaction of temperamental and dispositional attitudes upon the physical body. Here again, there are numerous systems for classifying the parts of human character upon which the planets act most directly. The color arrangements may appear arbitrary, but they are sanctified by the veneration of ages.

Moon: Silvery-grey, the achromatic range, and sometimes green. The lunar cycle particularly affects the emotions. Likes and dislikes are intensified. Functional disorders, especially those resulting from neurotic pressures.

Mercury: Blue, sometimes slate violet, plaids and checks. When disturbed, the Mercury ray tends towards restlessness, unjustified mental excitement, worry, and hypercriticism. By reaction these affect the respiratory and eliminative systems.

Venus: Yellow, pale blue and pastel shades. Venus intensifies erotic tendencies and vanity leading to disillusionments and resentments. The emotional nature dominates decisions, usually to the detriment of the personality.

Sun: Orange and deep tones of yellow—sometimes blue. Because the Sun is the universal nourisher, it may cause a surfeit within the system. Inordinate and uncontrollable love of food and a constantly increasing demand for physical strength. These personality factors can give trouble for those of older years desperately trying to remain young.

Mars: Scarlet, carmine, and magenta. The person who over-responds to the Mars vibration is often subject to violent outbursts of temperament, hysteria, combativeness, and hypercriticism. There is a strong irritating factor and, when this is manifested, it is almost impossible to satisfy the aggressive demands of these persons. There may be a tendency for the body to become overheated, thus wasting vital resources.

Jupiter: As father of the gods and a sky deity, Jupiter is associated with blue, violet, and the indigo tone of the midnight sky. Molecular nutrition, including cell development. A tendency to intemperance and danger of putting on excess weight. Ambitions may undermine health.

Saturn: Indigo, sage green, and dark colors generally. Ossification, congestion, function of tendons and cartilage, articulation of bone. Strong psychic drive. Health may be damaged by negative thinking.

Uranus: Light azure and combinations of bright colors brought into harmony through the electrical forces in the body. Personal magnetism, artistic instincts. Sleep phenomena. Erratic behavior disturbs the nervous and mental activities.

Neptune: Lavender, shades of brown, and sometimes black. Danger of involvement in occult matters leading to self-delusion. The auric field. Esoteric practices may disturb the natural flow of vital energy. Advanced meditational discipline and the function of the kundalini.

Pluto: Up to this time beliefs concerning the activity of this planet have not been systemized. Misty and faint colors suggesting twilight were associated with this god and may carry into the hues appropriate to the god of the underworld. It may influence colors not normally visible within our sensory range. Physiologically, the planet is usually disturbing, bringing with it intensive and often conflicting attitudes. Its higher polarity may have to do with these higher forms of consciousness which, even if experienced, cannot be clearly defined. The dominance of this factor generally is detrimental to physical health.

All trades and professions have their color signifiers and these can be studied at length in various textbooks on astrology. It must be assumed that human consciousness is sustained by light, every ray of which includes the potential of awareness. Definitions of consciousness are numerous and the term is used differently in various systems of philosophy and psychology. Consciousness is said to bestow the power to experience self, together with awareness of environment. This divides each person from all other persons, establishing him as an individual. If consciousness did not exist in man, he could not examine or estimate the forces operating around him and nature. The conscious self is supported by the testimonies of the sensory perceptions, and it becomes the coordinator of innumerable phenomenal experiences. The realization of personal selfhood can lead to self-centeredness, selfishness, and extravagant self-esteem. These are the natural pitfalls which Buddhism points out to be the hindrances to personal orientation in living. The recognition of self-being is essential to the growth of man or it would not be supported by the energy resources available to him. When the principal of self passes through the mental and emotional structure of human nature and finally expresses the instinct to separateness everywhere present

in the material world, all the relationships of life are complicated. Hindu philosophy solves this dilemma by postulating One Self diffused throughout created things. This Over Self is called the Atman because of its countless differentiated manifestations. Its final unity is obscured and often denied. Yet it is the self-orientation that has made possible the infinite diversity of human achievement. Light moving and sustained by the self or ego results in what we call self-expression. Specialization is permitted by nature or we would not have the variegated splendors of the world around us. Each species has its own archetype which flows into expression through the life-light nutrition which it receives from the solar ray. The world would be much poorer if it did not have poets, mystics, and dreamers. It would also be less beautiful if there were not artisans with specialized abilities to guide and direct the creative instinct. Mathematics and music, though interdependent, have contributed to the harmony of life. When properly disciplined, the vehicles through which consciousness moves become instruments of Divine Revelation. While many individuals go their own way building personal careers, there is an intuitive realization that in the end all must labor together for the greater glory of the Infinite Purpose.

Light has been called "the radiant fringe," on the robes of the Eternal. As the breastplate of the high priest of Israel was inlaid with the jewels of the twelve tribes, the human soul is a splendid synthesis of the colors of righteousness. The more we contemplate the labors of light, the more deeply we appreciate the alphabet of colors. As letters are brought together to form words, each with a specialized meaning, so every arrangement and combination of colors helps to spell out the definitions of those words of power which originally moved upon the surface of the deep.

To look upon the labors of light is to behold the face of God. To conquer the confusion of colors is to overcome the confusion in ourselves and to become more keenly aware of the laws which govern the growth and perfection of all things.

Many editions of *Bacon's Essays* include a fragment first published in 1597 entitled *Colours of Good and Evil*. His Lordship is concerned primarily with moral coloring by which the appearances of things are altered but their essential natures remain the same. When exposed to basic light, an object presents its normal characteristics, but when various hues are cast upon it certain aspects of its essential constitution are altered. The proper colors may be changed or modified and details may be emphasized or obscured. Attitudes color the mind and emotional intensities distort or disproportion the facts of a matter. Thus the light of reason broken up on a spectrum loses its essential vitality, and evidence is no longer trustworthy. As a lawyer Bacon was accustomed to the pleadings of attorneys who often deliberately attempted to deceive the court. In every person there is a prosecutor and a defender, the one determined to prove guilt and the other to exonerate the accused. In the resulting confusion, the judge must find according to the facts alone.

Because the appearances of matters are subject to temperamental peculiarities it is difficult for the average person to solve the mysteries of his inner life or resolve the complexities continually arising in his environment. Although Bacon did not claim to sponsor astrology, he stated that a rational form of genethliology was useful in affairs of state and the regulation of human conduct. Within each moral color there is a wide range of tonalities. An individual may claim to be honest in his intentions but he may still so color his concept of honesty that it will permit him to violate the code of universal morality without any sense of guilt. It is often more convenient to excuse a fault than to correct it, and in public affairs it is common to assume that ends justify means in cases where both lack integrity.

A brief examination of the characteristics of persons born under the rulership of the various planets indicates how they react to their astrological endowments.

The Moon bestows strong personal magnetism and inclines the native to humanitarian pursuits, but less evolved personalities may suffer from delusions, be

visionary, self-deceived, procrastinating, and addicted to bad habits.

Mercury gives a witty and retentive mind and an industrious temperament. When these virtues are not cultivated, however, the Mercurian can be unprincipled, tale-bearing, conceited, and addicted to worry.

Venus confers a cheerful, affectionate, and artistic nature, but those who do not live up to its positive attributes are often dissolute, superficial, and even vulgar.

The Sun suggests personal dignity, a liberal and democratic spirit, constructive dedication and a love of education. At the lower end of the tonal range is ostentation, pomposity, inordinate ambition, and respect for authority whether it be good or bad.

Mars brings with it courage, gallantry, and dedication to good causes. When the person's temperament does not support these attitudes, the Martian type is destructive, egotistic, cruel, treacherous, and quarrelsome.

Jupiter supports a benevolent disposition, honorable character, patience, justice, and fear of God. The negative Jupiterian is extravagant, dissipated, hypocritical, and self-indulgent.

Saturn strengthens the analytical powers, inspires faithfulness, thrift, chastity, and the willingness to carry responsibility. If these attributes are not cultivated, the native is over-conservative, pessimistic, stubborn, suspicious, and an over-zealous disciplinarian.

It should be noted that there are various symbolic interpretations for the color black. It is usually associated with mortality, but in a number of the philosophical systems of antiquity it has an entirely different meaning. It is sometimes used to represent all that lies beyond human sense perception, and therefore implies the unknown. The greater part of the universe is invisible to us and space itself is the source of the streams of light which radiate downward into the mortal sphere. In the Egyptian rites the throne of the Eternal Being was placed in the northern part of the sanctuary and was always shrouded in darkness. This deity was unknowable and

invisible. It was boundless, and locked within itself all that had been, all that is, and all that will be. Only the eye in the soul can be aware of pure life in space. By this symbolism, darkness comes to have two meanings. It can be the ineffable cause which transcends definition, and it can also be the limitation imposed by the imperfection of human consciousness and the restriction of the mental powers. The journey from darkness to light often symbolized the search for reality, a mystery that is beautifully described in *The Dark Night of the Soul*, by St. John of the Cross.

If the inner eye is opened, all darkness disappears. The solar system unfolds in a vast flower-like pattern, the colors of which are beyond description. Within this structure are the auric bodies of the planets moving in stately procession about the sovereign sun. Above and beyond the solar system are the blazing archetypal patterns of the constellations which in turn mingle their lights with the countless flames of the galaxy. Below on the earth every flower and plant has its own auric field, minerals shine with an interior light, and the earth beneath our feet is a mass of tiny stars. In the midst of this diffusion of colors stands the human being, himself, in an auric robe of glory. Every moment of existence, even what we like to call death, is bringing forth beings and creatures whose bodies will fade away, but whose invisible constitutions will shine forever.

Someday we will all develop those extrasensory perceptions with which a few have been endowed and we can then live in the eternal certainty of the Divine Splendor.

The color black was used to represent the veil of darkness through which each must pass before he can understand the higher secrets of his religion, the deeper meanings of his philosophies, and the essential dignity of himself.

It is said that of all mortals, Pythagoras alone was fully aware of the harmony of the spheres. Lao-tse implied that the tonal keynote in space was the great Kung—the sound that never begins and never ends. As light is diffused as a spectrum, so the great Kung flows through

existence as a tone that never fades away. It cannot be heard by mortal ears, but our primitive ancestors believed that they heard it in the sighing of wind through the branches of trees and all the strange sounds of the natural world. The chromatic scale and the musical scale are expressions of one principle. Richard Wagner used a language of sound in his leitmotiv, especially prominent in the Ring operas and the Grail cycle. Through this musical contrivance, he accomplished the symbolic meanings of all the characters and situations in his music dramas. They were cosmic stories and their most direct appeal was to the inner structure of the human soul. Today theatre settings have been greatly simplified and light beams have been used to establish the settings of plays. These floods and spotlights work against a background of darkness and the contrasts involved can be intensely dramatic. By contrast, manifested things stand forth clearly from the unmanifested potentials forever abiding in space.

Black has been associated with form, but through each of nature's myriad structures, light shines as from a many-colored lantern. There is an unmanifested core in each of us—a midnight sky—the abode of the innermost. This is the Divine Darkness. We live also in a world of embodied creatures building our way of life upon the dark earth beneath our feet. In the physical realms of uncertainty we are confronted by the negative pole of darkness, which in a sense is simply the imperfection of evolving creatures. As the Chinese poets have put it, we are climbing a ladder made up of jewels of light to come in the end to that darkness which is the source of all that we are.